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MILITARY AND POLITICAL MOBILIZATION IN THE GERMAN OCCUPIED EAST

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Description

German mobilization measures in the Baltic countries give the first detailed account of the behavior of a German civil administration under conditions of invasion. These measures are accompanied by a public "liberation" policy which has been executed only in the sphere of propaganda. Similar developments in other parts of the Occupied East make clear the real limitations upon a German liberation policy. This report supplements R and A No. 1756, "Development of the German Pattern of Occupation."

25 February 1944

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SUMMARY

The Germans are mobilizing the Baltic countries for defense and evacuation. In addition to certain security and requisition measures enacted by the Wehrmacht, the Nazis are using the puppet administrations to enact a sweeping conscription for military and para-military purposes. Estonia and Latvia are the scene of military mobilizations, while Lithuania has been subjected to a labor draft only. The provision now is for all these conscripts to perform duties in their own countries, but areas are being prepared in eastern Germany for their reception. Although all this is being done in conjunction with a running propaganda on the national liberation line, the Germans have granted no real concessions in the direction of sovereignty. This limitation upon German "emancipation" becomes even clearer in the other parts of the Occupied East: in neither White Russia nor the Ukraine has there been any implementation of the liberation propaganda, and especially in the Ukraine are there definite indications that the German civil administration intends to maintain its control as long as possible. Military necessity, the opposition of the native populations to the German type of "liberation," and the prestige bound up with the previous pattern of administration has imposed limits upon concessions and restricted this German policy to a nominal degree of execution.

MILITARY AND POLITICAL MOBILIZATION IN THE GERMAN-OCCUPIED EAST

I. THE BALTIC COUNTRIES

With the penetration of the Red Army into Estonia, the Germans have gone into frenzied activity to prepare the entire area of the Baltic countries as a combat zone.[1] This activity is both military and political, and consequently involves both the German authorities and the Baltic puppet administrations.

A. Military Measures

In January the semi-official German press in the Ostland declared that in the Baltic war zone "there are no longer any limits for military operations. The whole territory is practically one battlefield...."[2] On this basis the heads of the three Baltic native administrations declared, in proclamations issued at that time, that the military situation in the Baltic war zone was such that "the long cherished wish of the Baltic patriots to defend their countries near their own frontiers -- the legionaries' original task -- has now been realized."[3] In the first days of February these puppet leaders proclaimed a state of emergency in their respective countries and have mobilized the whole able-bodied population for military or para-military service.[4] This has been the most extensive in Estonia and Latvia, which have received, in the realm of promise, the most favorable political treatment from Germany. In Estonia the First National Director, Dr. Mae, has proclaimed the mobilization of all Estonian males, aged 17-60, into a "Protective Corps" for "self-defense." Within this general order, military mobilization proper has been

1. See R & A 1756, "Development of the German Pattern of Occupation."
2. Deutsche Zeitung im Ostland and Revaler Zeitung via Aftontidningen, 15 January 1944 (News Digest 1345).
3. Aftontidningen, 15 January 1944 (News Digest 1345).
4. Stockholm wire 374, 5 February 1944.
5. Ibid. 348, 3 February 1944.

decreed for the age-classes 1904-1923 and for all former members of the army of independent Estonia as well as for physicians, veterinaries, pharmacists, and medical personnel of all kinds. The induction of the 1914-1918 classes was reported as completed by 5 February and the accomplishment of the entire military mobilization was expected by 19 February.[1] The older men in these groups, who are presumed to have already had military experience are being sent into immediate active service, the younger are sent to training camps.[2] The 1924 and 1925 year-classes were called up in November and December, and at that time Mae ordered the cancellation of all deferments. In Latvia, where the mobilization of the 1915-1925 classes for the Latvian SS Legion was decreed in November, the 1918-1921 classes are now being called up and the conscription of the 1906-1914 age-groups has been announced by General Dankers, head of the native administration, in a proclamation calling on "The Latvian soldier once more" to "defend the freedom of his country --- against the tyranny of Moscow."[3] In Lithuania, where the opposition of the native population has prevented the formation of a Waffen SS legion, the Germans have been driven to concede the principle and are agreeing to the formation of a Lithuanian National Army, to consist of a division under Lithuanian command which would be employed only for the defense of the country in the event of a Russian invasion. The Germans have already proposed three candidates, former officers of the army of independent Lithuania, for the command, with the hope that they will be acceptable to the Lithuanian people.[4] This concession of a separate military

1. Stockholm wire 395, 7 February 1944.
2. Ibid. 348, 3 February 1944.
3. Ibid.406, 8 February 1944; Riga,Latvian Home Service, 4 February 1944 (FCC Daily).
4. OSS Daily Intelligence Summary, 7 February 1944; Stockholm wire A-99, 27 January 1944.

unit, the first to be made by the Germans to an occupied country, is motivated by the fact that only thus can the Germans hope to achieve military mobilization in Lithuania. The actual formation of the unit, however, is being held up by the German demand that a petition for its establishment be submitted by prominent Lithuanians. Thus far the Lithuanians have refused to save the Germans' face, generally on the grounds that there are no accredited representatives of the people to act in this capacity. The Germans have contented themselves with conscripting twenty year-classes for para-military labor service.[1] They have announced that the entire population of the Baltic area is subject to mobilization for work on fortifications.[2]

This mobilization of the Baltic peoples by the Germans is to prepare not only for defense but also for defeat. Hence it is related not only to military and para-military service but also serves to prepare arrangements for total evacuation of the Baltic area. East Prussia is being prepared for the reception of a million and a half evacuees from the Baltic countries and the General Government.[3] The function of this evacuation is two-fold: it is part of the scorched-earth policy the Germans intend to pursue, and as the shipment of a large number of Lithuanian construction workers to East Prussia reveals, the refugees are to form a labor force to work on the fortifications of the Reich's inner security wall. Many ships in Copenhagen, the harbors of Norway, and in Stettin have already been ordered to Riga to evacuate refugees.[4] The Estonian border areas, including the city of Narva, are being completely evacuated, and the removal from Tallinn is being

1. Stockholm wire 395, 7 February 1944.
2. Ibid, 406, 8 February 1944.
3. Ibid, 374, 5 February 1944.
4. Stockholm wire 397, 7 February 1944.

prepared. It is reported that the evacuation of German civilians from Tallinn was scheduled for 15 February at the latest. The German civil administration in Estonia is already packing its archives and is preparing to turn over its authority to the German Wehrmacht.[1]

Other measures in military preparation of the Baltic area as a combat zone include the provision of the death penalty in Estonia and Latvia for all who fail to report enemy agents, parachutists, and communists,[2] the execution of thirteen persons by order of a court martial for war crimes,[3] the probation of the sale of intoxicating beverages throughout the whole of the Baltic area,[4] and in Estonia the blocking of all roads, the prohibition of all civilian railway traffic, the cancellation of all travel permits,[5] the drive by the authorities to secure the delivery of agricultural quotas while transportation for civil commercial purposes remains open, the requisitioning by the Wehrmacht of foodstuffs in the rural areas, their taking over of foodshops in the towns, the registration of all vehicles, horses, and skiis.[6]

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid, 374, 5 February 1944. The Estonian order on this subject was issued by the German Commander in Chief in Estonia in a proclamation to the population: "Many persons connected with enemy agents have already been executed. Agents and parachutists repeatedly try to infiltrate among the population in order to procure information useful to the enemy. They also try to procure foodstuffs and offer their parachutes and other equipment as payment. Any support given to these agents is supporting the enemy and will, in accordance with the war laws, be punished by death." The Latvian order was issued as part of the proclamation of the state of emergency by the head of the native administration.
3. Svenska Dagbladet, 22 January 1944 (News Digest 1351).
4. Stockholm wire, 374, 5 February 1944.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid, 362, 4 February 1944.

B. Political Measures

The Germans are casting these administrative measures in the political mold of the struggle of the Baltic peoples for national liberation, representing them as the Baltic answer to the recent Soviet federalization decrees. Thus a spokesmen of the Wilhelmstrasse emphasized the independence of the Estonian administration in decreeing the mobilizations and stated concerning them: "Foreign nations taking part in the fight against communism do this exclusively for their own interest and in a wider sense for the interests of Europe. They do not fight for Germany."[1] While announcing that the Estonian armed units are receiving German equipment,[2] the Nazis promised that the military training would take place in Estonia.[3] Moreover, the Finnish press announced that Estonia and Latvia had received assurances of their future political existence.[4] Nor have minority groups been neglected by the Germans. A recent decree by the German General Commissar for Estonia created self-administrative organs for the Russian and Swedish minorities in that country,[5] while a decree of the Reich Commissar for the Ostland abolishes the status of Eastern Worker (Ostarbeiter) for Russians and Ukrainians in the Baltic General Districts and equates them with the local Baltic workers.[6] The relationship, however, between the political concessions and the military necessity

1. FCC Central European Analysis, No. 87, 10 February 1944.
2. Helsinki wire 103, 7 February 1944.
3. Stockholm wire 362, 4 February 1944.
4. Helsinki wire 102, 7 February 1944.
5. Revaler Zeitung (News Digest 1349).
6. Revaler Zeitung, 24 December 1943 (News Digest 1353); 100,000 Russians are reported to have been evacuated to Latvia alone, and these remain strongly Communist (OSS 28437). The improvement in their labor status is evidently designed as a sop to a group which has become dangerous through its size and its attitude.

is established by the fact that Estonians are replacing Germans in the civil and military administrations[1] only now when the German civil administration is preparing to evacuate and the Wehrmacht is concerning itself with operational problems. Moreover, while those guilty of desertion and other infractions of German military regulations among Baltic soldiers have been reprieved or given probationary relief, this has been definitely linked to "the seriousness of the situation, which is such that the defense of the Baltic States requires every man."[2] But the Germans have not gone beyond this marginal sphere and have not made any formal grants of independence. While holding out vague promises, they show clearly their intention to maintain ultimate control and to grant even the forms of sovereignty only after they have drained every possible contribution in return for it. Thus the German-controlled Estonian radio reminded its listeners that "the Baltic states had opposed Germany for twenty years and disregarded all German warnings" and that, as concerns present cooperation, "it would be wrong to assume everything is in perfect order"; "many important problems must be postponed until the end of the war," but "Adolf Hitler has decided that in case the Latvians, Estonians, and Lithuanians prove their determination to cooperate in the present struggle, they shall receive their share of the fruits of victory and be permitted to round out their own future."[3] Hence it has been reported that their propaganda overtures have not convinced the native populations: the

1. Stockholm wire 374, 5 February 1944.
2. Daughavas Vanagi (German-controlled Latvian front paper), via Aftontidningen, 15 January 1944, (News Digest 1345).
3. FCC, Eastern European Analysis, No. 17, 26 January 1944.

mobilizations have had to take a somewhat indirect form -- new conscripts go into the military administration or into para-military organizations like the self-defense units, the protective police, and the RAD, while these units furnish more reliable men for actual front fighting.[1] Moreover, the representative leaders outside the framework of the puppet administrations are not responding: officials of the former independent Estonian government have intimated that they have control of several regiments of the Estonian armed forces and that these have been instructed to resist the Germans if they attempt a total evacuation of the Estonian population and to put up a token resistance to the Red Army. They hope for a few days' grace between the end of the German and the beginning of the Russian control to proclaim Estonian independence and set up a provisional government. By means of this gesture they hope to mobilize world opinion which will force concessions from the Russians.[2] This gamble of everything upon a few hours of actual independence shows that the Baltic leaders see through German offers of a limited sovereignty tainted by the conditions of defeat which prompt them.

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1. OSS Daily Intelligence Summary, 7 February 1944.
2. OSS 28415. At least one prominent Estonian leader, however -- Uluots, former Premier and Speaker of the National Assembly in independent Estonia -- who has previously refused to collaborate with the Germans, has now spoken out in favor of the mobilization and has publicly advocated that settlement of German-Estonian relations wait until the end of the war. This appears to be an isolated case, however, since the negotiations of Dr. Mae with Estonian political leaders looking to their inclusion in his government have been reported as a failure. Stockholm wire 425, 9 February 1944.

II. OCCUPIED RUSSIA

A. White Ruthenia

What the Baltic countries can expect from German promises is clearly visible from German action in the other parts of the Occupied Eastern Territories where the conditions of German defeat are more advanced.

In White Ruthenia, the use of political concession as an instrument of German control is evident through the activities of the White Ruthenian Central Council, which has done little but preach resistance to the Red Army and cooperation with the Germans ever since its establishment. Ostrovski, President of the Council, has demanded that "every White Ruthenian village should be turned into a fortress and every man and woman should take an active part in fighting the large groups of Russian partisans operating in the White Ruthenian forests."[1] At the same time, the German General Commissar for White Ruthenia, von Gottberg, proceeded to increase the civil militia and ordered that entire villages be evacuated and occupied solely by it.[2] These have been given the special title of Self-Defense Villages (Selbstschutzdoerfer). The promises of the Council for the establishment of elementary, free tuition, and the complete liquidation of large landed properties and the collective farming system in favor of a system of private initiative have remained wholly in the sphere of speculation. Yet Germany has used this body, which owes its existence to the sovereign occupation authorities and exercises its limited powers only by delegation from them, as the embodiment of national independence. German radio propaganda beamed outside

1. Dagens Nyheter, 19 January 1944 (News Digest 1349).
2. Ibid.

of Germany has quoted the Central Council as rejecting Soviet rule in the following terms: "There can be no question of the partition of White Russia and the incorporation of parts of White Russia into the Soviet Union because White Russia, in its entirety, represents an independent political nation with a lawful government, the White Russian Central Council."[1]

B. Ukraine

German policy in the Ukraine, the first territory under German civil administration to be wrested from the Nazis, shows even more clearly the impossibility for the Germans, despite their public role as liberators, to yield any essential concessions. The conditions for giving full play to an emancipation policy appear to be ideal, for the German political and economic stake in the Ukraine has been liquidated. With the evacuation of 140,000 Germans (including both racial Germans and Reich German settlers) from the Ukraine to the Wartheland,[2] both the racial security wall and the economic space in the Ukraine cease to be factors of German exploitation. In line with this, German world-wide propaganda has announced that in Volhynia the numbers of Ukrainians cooperating with the German civil and military authorities are increasing and that these even include National Ukrainian partisans, who, according to the Germans, are turning their attention more and more exclusively to combatting the Red Army.[3]

Actually, however, the Germans do not go beyond propaganda in their liberation policy in the Ukraine.

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1. Berlin, DNB, European Press Service, 10 February 1944 (FCC Daily).
2. Bern wire 741, 5 February 1944.
3. Transocean, for Far East, 19 January 1944 (News Digest 1349).

Erich Koch, Reich Commissar for the Ukraine, in his New Year's Day address to the Germans in that territory, revealed the intention of the civil administration to remain and maintain German sovereignty in the area as long as possible. "Unlike previous governments, we have not packed our trunks at the approach of the enemy. We have remained where the Fuehrer has ordered us to stay."[1] The cause for this maintenance of the full power of the civil administration lies in the recognition that the liberation envisaged by the Ukrainians does not correspond with the collaborationist liberation under German domination acceptable to the Nazis. Koch declared: "The past year has vindicated German policy in the Ukraine. An Ukrainian independent existence can only materialize and begin in such a form and at such a time as is ordained by the Fuehrer, and no efforts of Ukrainian chauvinists can influence the Fuehrer's decision. Their persistent efforts only prove their political immaturity. Nothing but the effective, wholehearted support of the German Fuehrung can prove that this historically poor people deserves emancipation. Instead of fighting the Bolshevik bandits, the immature Ukrainian leaders chose to flee to the woods in order to harass the Germans. Although they are never too dangerous to the Germans, they render assistance, without wishing to do so, to the Bolsheviks and thus do bad service to the Ukrainian cause, as every square inch of Ukrainian territory abandoned by the German grenadiers will fall to the Bolsheviks."[2]

Even this admission of native opposition, which is itself opposed to the German world-wide propaganda, does

1. Deutsche Ukraine Zeitung, 5 January 1944. (News Digest 1353).
2. Ibid.

not tell the whole story. Polish government reports testify to an increasing pro-Soviet feeling in the western Ukraine and to a simultaneous weakening of the National Ukrainian Organization, a development which Koch could not admit even in his talk to the Germans. This kind of opposition obviates the possibility of actual concessions, since liberation for the Ukrainians does not correspond to the liberation under German hegemony envisaged by the Nazis. Hence to fulfill the tasks essential to the Wehrmacht, the German civil administration in the Ukraine, which has from the beginning of the occupation been organized to fulfill the needs of the German Army fighting just beyond its borders, must be maintained. Moreover, the previous pattern of total control continues to exercise effect: Koch is careful to emphasize that his administrative system maintains its complete integrity (within a limited territorial sphere) in order to show that the Nazi ideology maintains its political strength. The report that Hitler has, against the protests of von Manstein, ordered the execution of many thousands of collaborationist Ukrainians who might reveal details of the German administration, and especially of the German Security Service (Sicherheetsdienst), to the Soviet Union[1] is a graphic example of the mortgage left by the previous phase of German control.

III. CONCLUSION

The mobilization of the Occupied Eastern Territories for defense and the preparation of the area for defeat gives the first indication of what the final phase of Nazi policy in Europe is to be. The conscription of the

1. OSS 27174.

population is to serve not only the interests of defense in the immediate area but is to place the natives under complete German control for evacuation and whatever disposition the Germans will wish to make of them in the reception area. This preparation for a scorched-earth policy is placed in the political framework of national liberation, through the use of native puppets as national representatives in propaganda and as organs of the promulgation of German decrees. However, the limits of the Germans "emancipation" policy are clearly set, since the Germans have refrained from conferring even formal grants of sovereignty. These limits remain constant for all the invaded territories, for the Ostland (the Baltic countries and White Ruthenia) where the issue is camouflaged by the existence of central puppet administration, as well as for the Ukraine.

There are two primary causes for the limitations on the Nazi political policy:

1. The factor of military requirements. While it is true that the approach of operations places foremost the problems of military security and supply and thereby leaves marginal civil affairs free as subjects for concession, this requires a reliable puppet government that is strong enough to dispense with German support and relieve the Nazis of administrative burdens. Since, however, liberation under German hegemony does not correspond to the sovereignty conceived by representative native leaders the formation of such governments cannot be achieved.

2. The hold of previous German occupation policy. German civil administration in the Occupied East has always been closely geared to military requirements. Thus an identity

of personnel has always existed between the economic departments of the Reich Commissariats (under civil administration) and the corresponding sections of the military Economic Inspectorates of the Rear Zone of operations. Hence this civil administration is adequate to exercise controls even when military operations are at hand. Moreover, the very fact of a German civil administration has become an element in Reich prestige, and its dissolution would be a blow to the German home front and to the Wehrmacht itself, since the soldiers have been promised lands in a German-controlled eastern Europe.

As a result, administrative and political activity in the final phase of the German occupation of the East remains by and for Germany; activity by and for the countries concerned remains in the field of promise and propaganda, and even there involves only those natives who have an identity of interest with the Reich.